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## Racquel Reece

PRODUCING THE 'UNTOLD' CARIBBEAN STORIES

GREAT GIFT IDEAS FOR MOM

ENVY IN THE WORKPLACE

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Racquel Reece: Producing  
the 'Untold' Caribbean Stories

Great Gift Ideas for Mom



## *Quote of The Week*

"A daughter is a mother's gender partner, her closest ally in the family confederacy, an extension of her self. And mothers are their daughters' role model, their biological and emotional road map, the arbiter of all their relationships."

-Victoria Secunda

## *Editor's Note*

It is often said that if you want something done right, you do it yourself. Racquel Reece is doing just that as her media production company allows everyday Caribbean people to tell their stories in their own words. Also, Mother's Day is just six days away. We have some great gift ideas to show Mom how much you love her, plus more, in this week's issue.

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Laugh a Lot.*



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*Racquel  
Reece*

## PRODUCING THE 'UNTOLD' CARIBBEAN STORIES

by Tracey-Ann Wisdom

“My feet are still on the ground. I just wear better shoes.” This famous quote from Oprah Winfrey sums up the aspirations of media entrepreneur Racquel Reece, Executive Producer of the team behind last year's award-winning documentary, 'Our Very Own: Locked Up Abroad'. Like Oprah, Racquel had a hard childhood, which saw her shuttling from parish to parish with her single father, who is still her main source of inspiration. She could have easily given up, but a steely determination to rise above her circumstances saw her matriculating to Manchester High School, one of Jamaica's top secondary institutions. Although she is still constantly on the move, this time it's her choice. “I like taking myself places. I think I'd like to climb to that place where I can change the shoes,” she laughed.

Racquel has much to smile about these days. Her company, Advanced Media Productions (AMP), has collected

a series of accolades for the 'Our Very Own' documentary, which featured the drug trafficking and deportation story of popular television producer and presenter Kerie 'Kiki' Lewis-Thombs. The film has received the Jamaica Broilers Group Fair Play Award in the Best Electronic Media category and has been praised both locally and abroad, including a commendation from BBC Caribbean, which lauded it as a “quite interesting...very slick production”. This was a true 'pinch yourself' moment.

“BBC was my dream. There was a level of sincerity in [their] productions that I wanted to aspire to, I hungered and yearned to see in our media. I never really thought it would happen, but I knew that I wanted to and I told myself, 'Do what you can and all you can', and that's what I've tried to do,” Racquel says, genuine excitement evident in her voice.



Racquel proudly displays the Jamaica Broilers Group Fair Play Award for AMP received for the documentary 'Our Very Own: Locked Up Abroad.'

That excitement fades a bit as she bemoans the quality of local media output. As a media practitioner, she recognizes the high expenses and other challenges involved in the production process, but she is bothered by what she calls the “mediocrity” evident in the programmes. “I think there needs to be a stronger level of sincerity in local media. That’s just my view from a professional standpoint, and I have worked in the media,” she states.

Racquel discovered a natural inclination towards communications while studying Business Education at Northern Caribbean University (NCU). She eventually made the switch to Mass Communications. Since then, she has worked at NCU Radio, Creative Production and Training Centre (CPTC) and CVM TV. Eventually, she became frustrated, not getting to do the types of projects she liked and longing to be part of a dynamic team that would produce the ‘untold stories’ of people in Jamaica and the Caribbean who often feel, like her, trapped in their lives by their circumstances. This frustration with the narrow focus of local programming led Reece to leave CVM and begin working on her own productions, at the encouragement of her friend and now business partner, Julius Levy. “You don’t just want the media; you want the right media, someone who is not going to just sensationalize your story, because it’s not just a piece of news. It’s your life. It’s something that you have to live in and experience on a very intimate level every single day, and I don’t think the media quite get that,” she explains.

The dream of AMP was finally realized in September 2009 after much discussion with two other business partners.

However, the team eventually boiled down to her and Julius, the General Manager, presenter of the ‘Our Very Own’ documentary and website administrator. As Executive Producer, Racquel does a variety of tasks, including writing proposals and storylines, doing graphics, editing and packaging. “I do my projects in a different kind of way from what I see most Jamaicans do. I don’t like to tell peoples’ stories. I like them to tell it themselves. What I do is guide the process,” she says. “Advanced Media Productions seeks to redefine excellence in Caribbean media and we want to showcase Caribbean stories and talents. We want to connect people through story.”

The company currently has a raft of programmes in production and others ready to roll out, including the second episode in the ‘Our Very Own: Locked Up Abroad’ series, slated for release later this year. There is also ‘Our Very Own: Living Abroad’, profiling the experiences of Caribbean nationals overseas. Another programme is the monthly series ‘A Caribbean Story’, which has three components: ‘e-Carib’, which looks at entertainment in the region as well as among Caribbean nationals living abroad; ‘CaribMinutes’, which focuses on topical issues that affect us as a region and ‘CaribLife’, which explores the cultures and daily lives of people living in the region. There is also the AMP Writers Club, which encourages appreciation of original Caribbean thought and features a related television component where established and upcoming writers are profiled.

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